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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000535

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION FEB 14-16: IRAQ, PEACE
PROCESS, HALLIBURTON

1. SUMMARY: Dire assessments of US-led efforts in Iraq as generating "stumbling chaos" are juxtaposed with the conflict in Palestine on Kuwait's op/ed pages this week. On the issue of whether local Kuwaiti firms improperly profited from contracts with US company Halliburton to provide fuel oil to Iraq, commentators opine that the lack of transparency in deliberations by Kuwait's National Assembly will ultimately impede any real disclosures in the case.
End Summary.

2. "How Does President Bush Run the Occupation's Steering Wheel"
Dr. Abdullah Al-Nafisi wrote in independent Al-Watan (2/14): "Between their military might and poor diplomacy in Iraq, the Americans are lost. They don't seem to possess the least bit of political intelligence needed to run the areas under their occupation. Furthermore, Bush represents the most radical image of his Administration; he is dominated by inconsistent and distorted impressions about managing this occupation. He and his political team are more interested in the Halliburton-KBR contracts than in the daily political grind prevalent amongst Iraq's numerous political parties. Bush's style in communicating on Iraq, by alleging victory in the midst of stumbling chaos, is no different in its essence than Al-Sahaf (former Iraqi minister of information). If I were American, I would say to Bush please be quiet."

3. "If a Corruptor Brings Bad News ."
Dr. Sami Naser Khalifa wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-A'am (2/14): "America has declared its intention of dividing Iraq by sectarian denomination to Sunni, Shia, Arabs and Kurds under the pretext of federalism. Terms such as Sunni triangle, and the Shia South continue to be heavily used in the American press. All Iraqis, regardless of their sect and religious denomination, must unite in confronting the danger represented by this American plan that aims at creating a chasm among Iraqis."

4. "Avoiding the Snake does not mean Safety"
Dr. Najji Saoud Al-Zaid wrote in independent Al-Qabas (2/15): "We hope that living conditions in Iraq will improve, and that our government will take caution against rushing emotionally toward Iraq and the Iraqis. The American position is very clear; by exerting pressure on the United Nations to play a more significant role in running the affairs of a free Iraq, America, in an election year wants to rid itself of the security liability in the fastest possible time and with the minimum of costs, so that the United Nations can take the blame."

5. "Sharon's Shadow"
Saleh Al-Shayji wrote in independent Al-Anba (2/15): "Because we want the Palestinian child to be happy, to go to school, to eat well, and live a normal life, we are against the business of selling blood. We are against Ahmad Yaseen (Hamas), Rantisi (Hamas), Shami (Jihad), and all who walk a bloody path. These people were able to build their glory at the expense of the simple and needy Palestinians, and tempt them with money so that their children were sacrificed for the likes of Yaseen. We want the Palestinian children to be productive and to lead a normal life, therefore, Palestinians must begin their struggle by eliminating such people so that they can live in security."

6. "Palestine's War. A Loser's War?"
Dr. Shafiq Al-Ghabra wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-A'am (2/16): "Continued Israeli incursions and massacres committed in Gaza are escalating the degree of danger. As long as civilians are the targets of Israeli attacks, Hamas and Jihad gain political strength, while the PA is weakened. In turn, the Palestinian resistance reflects the desperate measures they are willing to undertake, in order to depart from the current status quo. The situation will only result

in Israel's demise and more Palestinian losses. The situation has reached a dead end, but every dead end is a beginning of a new road."

17. "A Matter of Envy, Not Corruption"

Influential editor-in-chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (2/15): "The Halliburton affair is not about public funds, but a dispute between private companies. It seems obvious that the companies, which did not get a share in the profits, are the ones lamenting their loss and demanding a sweep against alleged corruption. The crux of the matter is that a Kuwaiti company profited from dealing with an American company, so where is the corruption in that?"

18. "Halliburton. To You"

Rashed Al-Rada'an wrote in independent Al-Watan (2/16): "The minister of energy demonstrated his preparedness to cooperate with the parliamentary committee on the Halliburton contract. The fact is that the parliamentary committee will not be able to conduct a thorough inquiry as long as the case is under investigation by the public prosecutor. Therefore any public announcements by the committee before the outcome of the investigation will only cause it embarrassment. Our experiences with parliamentary inquiries are bitter, because after numerous previous inquiries, justice was never achieved. The Halliburton case requires transparency on a national scale, a clean conscience and a calm solution."

19. "Winds of Valentine"

Nabil Al-Fadhel wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-A'am (2/16): "Halliburton's shockwaves continue to ripple through the Kuwaiti arena, especially in the absence of parliamentary transparency, due to lack of information. Our concern is, was there foul play on the Kuwaiti side? It is clear that public funds were not violated, since Al-Tanmiya (Kuwaiti subcontractor) offered twenty million dollars as a bank guarantee. As for the affair being reported in the American press, its relevance will not pass unnoticed by the two political parties fighting a vicious tactical strategy in an election year."

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